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Onion Lake Cree Nation sues Alberta over its Sovereignty Act

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A First Nation located on the border between Alberta and Saskatchewan is the first to launch a legal challenge to Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

On Dec. 19, Onion Lake Cree Nation filed its statement of claim against the Sovereignty Act, or Bill 1, calling the legislation "offensive to the spirit and intent of our Treaty."

Smith's signature piece of legislation allows the provincial government to challenge federal legislation it deems to be counter to Alberta's interests.

Indigenous nations from Treaties 6, 7 and 8 territories said they have weren't consulted on the legislation,

which has major potential to impact their Treaty rights, which are the product of an agreement with the Crown, not the province.

"We have no choice but to use the colonial courts to defend our Treaty rights and sovereign jurisdiction as Alberta has passed this law without any consultation from our Nation," Okimaw (Chief) Henry Lewis said in a news release announcing the suit.

Lewis added that there's no evidence from any of the debates in the legislature, or anywhere else, that the UCP sought consultation with any First Nations.

This lack of consultation is a blatant violation of Treaty 6, which was signed with the Crown in 1876 - well predating Alberta's existence as a province, the news release notes.

"Not once did the Government of Alberta meet with us about the proposed law to ask for input into how it would impact us. Even the Minister of Indigenous Relations [Rick Wilson] admitted that not enough consultation had been done," Lewis said.

"What does that say about the Government of Alberta's relationship with Indigenous peoples when the minister in charge of Indigenous relations says more could have been

done?"

Chief Lewis said the Government of Saskatchewan. which has proposed, but has yet pass, similar to legislation. the Saskatchewan First Act, ought to withdraw it while it still has the chance.

Michael Marchen, a lawyer representing Onion Lake Cree Nation, said at a news conference covered by the Edmonton Journal that a lack of consultation with First Nations the legislation

would impact makes it blatantly unconstitutional.

"It wrests control of all treaty rights and the treaty relationship from the Crown and right of Canada, to the Lieutenant Governor and council of Alberta," he said.

The nation is seeking an injunction against the bill and legal costs.

Onion Lake Councillor Bernadene Harper told the news conference that the nation wants to improve relations with the provincial government, but that in order to do so the legislation must be scrapped.

"I speak from the heart: Today we are here, we are alive, and we are still willing to work with the government according to the treaties that were promised to us. They made a promise when they made that final decision," she said.

NDP justice critic Irfan Sabir called the bill an "avoidable setback for reconciliation and a blow to economic certainty."



New film documents the inspiring story of Kyle Young Pine

"What started as a film about skateboarding and feather dancing unearthed a journey of recovery and growth." These words introduce a new Telus original film entitled *Piita Aapasskaan- The Kyle Young Pine Story*.

As a kid, Kyle Young Pine grew up skateboarding in Calgary as a means to escape his reality. The community and freedom he found there removed him from the substance use that was happening at home, a result of pervasive generational trauma.

He struggled to find his true identity. He was never taught in the Blackfoot ways, his urban upbringing was far from the Blood Tribe lands, which challenged Kyle to find his true identity. When skateboarding wasn't enough, Kyle turned to other means of coping, until he was introduced to Fancy Feather Dancing at a local powwow. Now Kyle uses the art form to express himself and educate others on the power of Blackfoot



Kyle Young Pine, in full fancy feather dance regalia. (Still from Piita Aapasskaan: The Kyle Young Pine Story).

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traditions, and help others on their addiction recovery journey.

Kyle's story – the multi-award-winning documentary film *Piita Aapasskaan* (pronounced bee daa bee sats bee), *The Kyle Young Pine Story* - shares his journey of finding art and tradition to express and heal.

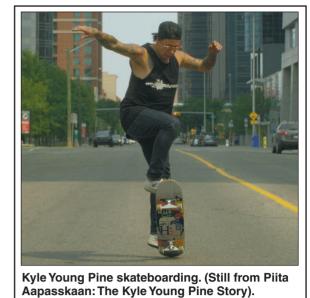
This short documentary has captivating imagery, and parallels between skateboarding and Fancy Feather Dancing. While the story may be bright and colourful, its deeper meaning is to inspire others to be their best selves. Kyle is now a recovery coach at Recovery Coaches Alberta, devoted father and Fancy Feather Dancer who inspires and guides others on their own journey to wholeness.

Piita Aapasskaan is a TELUS original film and has just launched on TELUS Optik channel 8 and for free on the TELUS originals YouTube channel. This film provides much-needed

> inspiration at a time when many people are resetting and re-evaluating their life choices. Kyle hopes that his story will help others realize gratitude for where life leads us and for the people who support us.

> The film is written and directed by Brock Davis Mitchell. Having grown up with Kyle, Mitchell had a curiosity and admiration for what Kyle had been pursuing in Fancy Feather Dancing, and wanted to create a film that showcased the journey of his skateboarding to dancing. What came from that was a deeper connection and more meaningful story about Kyle's recovery and personal growth.

Mitchell's work has garnered



numerous accolades across the country including a 2020 Western Canada Music Awards nomination for 'Video Director of the Year', 2020 Toronto International Film and Video Award nomination for 'Best Music Video', to his more recent wins for 'Audience Choice' award at the 2022 Calgary International Film Festival and 'Best Documentary Short' at the 2022 Alberta Film and Television Awards.

The story of Kyle Young Pine has been a beacon of hope and empowerment for those who have been impacted by generational trauma or the stigmas of substance abuse. The film continues to be used as a resource for presentations and conversations around reconciliation, overcoming addiction in families and seeking a deeper connection with culture.

"My recovery journey began in the fall of 2013 – November to be exact," said Kyle. "After surpassing 9 years in recovery this year, I aim to help others in whatever recovery looks like for them. Working for Recovery Coaches Alberta has opened my heart to help others and I'm truly honoured to have a great team to walk alongside with."

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Lethbridge College to offer Indigenous Policing microcredentials

Lethbridge College will soon be offering an Indigenous Policing (Niitsitapi Inakiikawaiks) microcredential program.

The suite of microcredentials – short-term, flexible learning programs designed for reskilling or upskilling – will provide culturally appropriate education to Indigenous police services as they work to address the needs of their communities. Courses will be delivered online for asynchronous self-paced learning and will be available to current officers, cadets and – where appropriate – Lethbridge College School of Justice students.

"Current cadet training in Western Canada is not specific to Indigenous policing," says Trudi Mason, Dean of the Centre for Justice and Human Services. "These microcredentials will focus on restorative justice and community-based policing and will begin to bridge the gap identified by our industry partners."

Based on consultations with partner police services, Lethbridge College will offer six microcredentials within the Indigenous Policing program: domestic violence/elder abuse, sexual abuse/human trafficking, impaired driving, Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA)/ drug matters, writing and tribal policing.

The CDSA/drug matters microcredential is on track for an early spring delivery. The remaining five microcredentials are being developed to launch in the fall.

"I am pleased to see the development of these microcredentials as we work collaboratively with Lethbridge College to enhance policing in our community and beyond," says Blood Tribe Police Chief Grant Buckskin. "The Blood Tribe Police Service has worked closely with the college for several years through its Police Cadet Training program and we look forward to continued success with the new course offerings."

Completion of the Indigenous Policing microcredential program will be recognized with digital badges issued on the Badgr platform.

The new program also has potential for growth. "It's not a stretch to think this suite of microcredentials could lead to an academic credential program similar to our existing Police Cadet Training program," says Mason.



Barwegen at her Police Cadet Training graduation.

"Six tribal police services across four provinces – Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba – have already expressed interest in being involved."

Indigenous Policing is one of five microcredential programs being developed at Lethbridge College over the next two years due, in part, to \$376,150 in provincial funding from the *Alberta at Work initiative*.

For more information on Lethbridge College's new Indigenous Policing microcredentials, contact infojustice@lethbridgecollege.ca.

Report on Serenity's death raises flaws with child welfare system

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The death of a four-year-old Cree girl in Maskwacis was the result of her being taken away from her mother by the child welfare system, a judge has ruled following a fatality inquiry.

The girl, referred to pseudonymously as 'Serenity', sustained a major head injury after falling off a swing while she and two of her siblings were in the care of her great aunt and uncle in September 2014.

"What led up to her death started the day she was removed from the care of her mother... on Jan. 11, 2011," Alberta Judge Renee Cochard said in a report released Jan. 4.

There's no evidence Serenity was being cared for improperly by her mother, Cochard added. Serenity and her siblings were taken away from their mother due to an abusive partner.

The report found that Serenity's health declined after being put into foster care.

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"Serenity was growing, found to be healthy by the nurse and had a mother who was concerned about her daughter's well-being while having to cope with the fact that her two older children... had been apprehended from her care," Cochard said.

Her guardians were criminally charged in 2017 with failing to provide the necessities of life, although those charges were stayed in 2019 after the Crown determined there was no reasonable prospect of conviction.

The inquiry involved testimony from 18 witnesses and the results of a preliminary inquiry, finding insufficient communication between the health-care and child welfare sectors, as well as a failure on the part of child welfare workers to catch warning signs of inadequate care.

According to the report, Serenity was taken to a doctor in July 2013 after a caseworker noted she was losing weight. The doctor shared the caseworker's concern, but Serenity wasn't taken to the doctor again.

After her fall from the swing, Serenity was

taken to a hospital in Ponoka and then airlifted to Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton, where she died.

In Ponoka, a doctor noted she was underweight and had a bruise on her cheek and genitals.

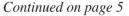
In Edmonton, a health-care worker said her being "extremely emaciated" may have played a role in the severity of her accident.

The judge's report made 20 recommendations to prevent something like Serenity's death from occurring again, including requiring medical examiners' reports be conducted within six months, only taking children away from their parents as a last resort and that parents whose children have been taken away should have immediate access to Legal Aid.

It also suggested the government should provide foster parents and caregivers with the child's medical history "in a timely manner."

In the report, Cochard wrote that the funds spent on putting Serenity and her siblings into foster care should have been spent giving their mother the support she required.

"Children's services has spent thousands of dollars keeping these children away from their mother," Cochard said. "They have spent resources on foster care, drivers, support workers for foster parents, special investigators, and the whole administrative





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FN Educators Conference returns with hybrid format

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The First Nations' Educators Conference is the Stoney Education Authority. back for 2023, with in-person attendance an option for the first time since the COVID pandemic began.

The theme for this year's conference, which takes place on February 1 and 2 at the Calgary Airport Westin, is "Advancing First Nation Education."

The purpose of the annual event, which is in its fourth iteration this year, is to bring together educators from Treaties 6, 7 and 8 to discuss the positive impact of education for First Nations.

This year's headline speaker is Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first Indigenous justice minister, who will deliver a keynote address entitled "Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation."

Wilson-Raybould was famously demoted from her cabinet role after resisting pressure from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to not prosecute the Montreal-based firm SNC-Lavalin for fraud and corruption relating to \$48 million in payments to Libyan government officials from 2001 to 2011. She detailed her experiences in her memoir, Indian in the Cabinet.

The other speakers are Pam Palmater, Dwayne Donald, Leroy Little Bear, Kerrie Moore and Michael Redhead Champagne, as well as a youth panel. Daryl Kootenay is the event's emcee.

The Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (IKWC) is co-hosting the conference with

CEO IKWC Clayton Kootenay told Alberta Native *News* that although the event is "operated by First Nations for First Nations," anyone is welcome.

There are 62 band-operated schools in Alberta, educating 18,000 students, highlighting the need for an Indigenousoriented education conference to assist teachers working in those classrooms, Kootenay said.

In the past, attendees have included teachers, administrators, and support staff in the band school system, as well as the public and separate systems, from across Canada.

Last year, there were educators who tuned into the virtual event from Australia and New Zealand.

The event's speakers are selected by committee based on the conference's yearly theme. Kootenay said it made sense for Wilson-Raybould, who released a book last year called True Reconciliation, to instruct educators how to "enact reconciliation in the classroom."

After her address, Wilson-Raybould will have a question-and-answer session followed by a book signing.



In-person attendance, which has a capacity of 500, is already sold out, he added. But organizers decided to opt for a hybrid format this year, so people who are more COVID-conscious can still attend online.

Kootenay said last year's format had its limitations. With all the participants separated from each other, it lacked the social cohesion that is a major draw for professional conferences.

"You'll get that human aspect to it [this year]," Kootenay said.

He hopes attendees, whether in-person or online, will come away from the conference with 'tangible tools" they can use in the classroom.

Virtual tickets cost \$195 plus tax and can be purchased online at https://forms.gle/6pE69Y3cgdsatro37.

Serenity's death cont. from p 4

machine of children's services.

"Had this money been spent on providing services to [redacted], such as childcare support, a home, proper financial help, so that she did not have to live in a basement and educational support, the inquiry's view is that the end result would have been much different."

She said it appears that the "default position" of Children's Services is to take children away from their parents.

Serenity's mother told APTN News she shares this view.

"If there were the proper support, I think things could have been handled way different. I do agree that they did spend a lot of money trying to keep my kids from me," the mother, who now lives in B.C., said.

However, she didn't express confidence that these recommendations would actually get implemented.

"Our younger generation - they aren't going to do better if the system doesn't do better," the

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mother told the CBC.

In a Jan. 4 statement following the release of the inquiry report, Minister of Children's Services Mickey Amery said "substantial changes have been made to help prevent this tragedy from happening again.'

In 2019, the UCP government passed Serenity's Law, which allows adults with knowledge that a child is being abused to report it to police, rather than a child welfare director. It also increased the penalty for failing to report child abuse from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and upwards of six months in jail.

"We will continue to make and support improvements going forward, including reviewing the fatality inquiry judge's recommendations with all of the seriousness this death deserves," Amery said.

The minister claimed in his statement that the

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government implemented "every has recommendation" the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and the Office of the Statutory Director made in the wake of Serenity's death.

In January 2022, outgoing child and youth advocate Dale Graff called on the provincial government to publicly disclose which of his recommendations have been implemented.

A committee vote put forward by NDP MLA Heather Sweet to summon ministers to hear an update on their progress was quashed 6-4. Amery was one of the MLAs to vote against it.



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'PROUDLY SERVING ALBERTA'S FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES FOR OVER A DECADE"

Killer of Metis hunters sentenced to life

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A man who shot and killed Métis hunter Maurice Cardinal has been sentenced to life imprisonment for second-degree murder, with no parole eligibility for 13 years.

Anthony Bilodeau, 34, was also sentenced to a concurrent eight years for the manslaughter death of another hunter, Jacob Sansom, and also received 33 months credit for time served.

Court of King's Bench Justice Eric Macklin ruled that although Bilodeau's prospects for rehabilitation are quite high, the punishment must reflect the tragic consequences of the crime.

"Jacob Sansom and Maurice Cardinal were also pillars of their communities," Macklin said. 'They were hunters and teachers for their families as well as their communities."

Last year, Bilodeau's father, Roger, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for manslaughter in relation to the killing of 57-year-old Cardinal and 39-year-old Sansom. It was Anthony Bilodeau, however, who shot and killed the hunters after Roger asked him to assist in pursuing them and to bring a gun.

Macklin added that Anthony killed "two innocent men doing no more than celebrating a successful day providing food to others."

"He brought a gun, at the direction of his father, without questioning its need or the full circumstances," said the judge. "Within seconds,

he loaded and racked his rifle and shot Jacob Sansom in the chest, and shot Maurice Cardinal three times."

Sansom and Cardinal were "important members of their families and stalwarts of their communities," Macklin said.

"They were men who honoured Mother Earth and were knowledgeable of their culture. They inspired many."

Crown prosecutor Jordan Kerr had argued Anthony showed a "callous disregard for the life and well-being of the deceased."

The family said they needed time to process the news before commenting on the sentence.

Journal reporter Edmonton Johnny Wakefield noted the victims' Indigenous heritage "deeply coloured public perception of the trial," with many comparing their killing to the death of Colten Boushie. In however, Boushie's case, Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley was acquitted after pleading self defence.

Boushie's mother. Debbie Baptiste, attended Anthony's trial on the day of the jury's verdict.

Andrea Sandmaier,

president for Region 2 of the Métis Nation of Alberta, addressed reporters outside the courthouse, where supporters of Sansom and Cardinal had gathered, hugging and shedding tears after the sentencing while a group drummed and sang.

"All the days since that day have been really tough for this family and this community and no amount of justice will ever ease their pain or bring the boys back," she said.

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The following day, the Métis Nation of Alberta issued a statement, expressing support "the families and communities of the Métis hunters, as well as all Alberta Métis," and thanking those "who brought to public attention the need to reduce racism for Métis and all Indigenous people, including respect for their culture and traditions."

"It is important the Alberta Courts continue to make anyone guilty of all forms of violence against our people, culture, and ways of life, accountable for their crimes," the statement said.

Ottawa appoints former MMIWG National Director to new position

Ottawa has appointed a Ministerial Special and Indigenous-led Representative an organization to address two of the Calls for Justice issued by the 2019 National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Jennifer Moore Rattray has been appointed Ministerial Special Representative who will provide advice and recommendations, through engagement with survivors, families, partners and organizations, in support of Call for Justice 1.7 to create an Indigenous and Human Rights



Ombudsperson.

Rattray is a member of the Peepeekisis First Nation in Saskatchewan and currently holds the title of Chief Operating Officer at Southern Chiefs' Organization. She is the former Executive Director of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which delivered a final report and 231 Calls for Justice to the Prime Minister and Premiers in June of 2019, and a former Assistant Deputy Minister with the province of Manitoba.

"I am honoured to be appointed as Ministerial Special Representative to be undertaking this important work and ensuring the voices of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people are heard, acknowledged, and reflected in the priorities and recommendations undertaken as a result of this initiative," stated Rattray.

Innovation 7, an Indigenous organization, has been chosen to develop recommendations for an oversight mechanism to enhance accountability and progress in ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. This represents a tangible step in responding to the calls from survivors and families for greater monitoring and accountability, the National Inquiry's Call for Justice 1.10 as well as one of the short-term

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Continued on page 7

Best wishes to First Nations, Metis and Inuit families throughout the province.

MLA Adriana LaGrange Red Deer-North



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TD and AFOA offer scholarship for Indigenous youth

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

TD Bank has started its first-ever scholarship for Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary education, in partnership with the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA) of Canada.

The scholarship offers \$15,000 a year for up to four years for 25 high school and university students who are Indigenous, as well as a mandatory paid summer internship with TD.

Joshua Cayer, the diversity talent recruiter for Indigenous Peoples at TD, told Alberta Native News his job is "to ensure that TD's current and future workforce is reflective of the communities in which we operate and serve."

The scholarship program was the product of "acknowledging and recognizing that students from the Indigenous community face unique challenges and systemic barriers that can make getting a post secondary education difficult," Cayer said.

According to StatCan's 2011 National Household Survey - the most recent one from which data is available - 48.4 per cent of Indigenous people had a post-secondary qualification, compared with 64.7 per cent of the

non-Indigenous population.

This disparity becomes starker when you look at the percentage of those with a university degree - 9.8 per cent for Indigenous people compared to 26.5 per cent for non-Indigenous.

To make the scholarship as accessible as possible, there no lengthy essay are requirements, nor are there any requirements to have done extensive volunteer work.

"We've also removed pressure to maintain a set minimum GPA," Cayer added.

Instead, the application requires applicants to answer a short question, provide two references from people who aren't family members, and a "commitment to accept summer internships at TD during the years of study," he said.

AFOA will help applicants with their applications as needed.

The internships last from May to August and will be located across the country "across various lines of business," said Cayer.

The intention is for the internship to "align with the career goals and educational aspirations of recipients," he added.

In the event recipients don't have a TD office where they're located, there's an opportunity for a hybrid of virtual and in-person work.

"TD remains committed to helping create a positive experience at every touch point along the way for all customers and communities we serve," Cayer said, adding that as a result, TD is committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

> Call to Action 92(ii) calls on corporations to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to "[e]nsure that indigenous peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that indigenous communities gain long term sustainable benefits from economic development projects."

Ottawa appoints cont. from p 6

priorities of the National Action Plan.

"Accountability is an important element to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. As the Ministerial Special Representative, Jennifer Moore Rattray will play a key role in engaging with Indigenous Peoples, survivors and families, and Indigenous women's and 2SLGBTQI+ organizations to provide meaningful recommendations that will accelerate our progress on implementing the Calls for Justice," stated Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Marc Miller. "Her appointment, and its subsequent outcomes, also represent an important step forward in making a difference in the lives of survivors, families, and communities - to put an end to this national crisis."

Meanwhile, on January 10, Minister Miller convened a national roundtable with Indigenous leaders and partners and federal, provincial and territorial governments on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

The national roundtable is playing an important role in facilitating collaboration across local, regional and national levels to address the ongoing violence against Indigenous women,

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girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. The collective knowledge and lived experiences that were shared will help support the implementation of priorities that are still needed to make constructive and meaningful change, with the voices of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people at the forefront of these efforts.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers and government representatives had an opportunity to highlight their recent actions to advance work to prevent and end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people. Ministers and government representatives noted the importance of understanding the priorities of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQI+ people, survivors and families and continuing to deliver and develop tailored programs and services that are both sustainable and reliable, as well as providing support for urban initiatives.

They are working to ensure that survivors, families, grassroots and Indigenous organizations are included in discussions about violence against

Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ and people; that federal, provincial and territorial departments

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and agencies work together to better coordinate efforts in addressing racism, discrimination and gender bias and race-based violence, while recognizing and upholding Indigenous rights.

Federal ministers and government representatives committed to pursue future opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous leaders, provincial and territorial governments and other partners to work towards implementing the identified key priorities to support Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQI+ people, survivors, families and their communities.

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Crisis Line is available to provide emotional support and crisis referral services to individuals impacted by the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. Call the toll-free Crisis Line at 1-844-413-6649. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.





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TD Scholarship for Indigenous Peoples Aims to Provide New Opportunities to Youth from Indigenous Communities

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communities have the opportunity to benefit from post-secondary schooling and work experience, TD is launching the TD Scholarship for Indigenous Peoples, managed by AFOA Canada. summer internship and have opportunities to build their network through mentorship and career development programs.

Through it, 25 scholarships are available to be awarded annually, worth up to \$60,000 over 4 years.



To learn more about the new TD Scholarship for Indigenous Peoples and how to apply, please visit td.com/indigenousscholarship.

Application period closes January 16, 2023.